The Builder.

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N our present number we have the pleasure of placing before our readers the design for covering the heretofore open area of the Exchange at Antwerp, by M. Charles Marcellis, which is now being carried out.* For several years past the project has occupied the attention of the architects of Belgium, and various designs were made by Messrs. Leysen and Berckmans, Cluysenaar, Suys, Durlet, Schadde, and others. Ultimately, the municipal authorities prescribed a competition, and the design by M. Marcellis was selected from those submitted. It was definitively adopted by the *Conseil Communal* in July 1850. The contest was a sharp one, and there was a heavy discharge of pamphlets raising and meeting objections, very creditable to the critical acumen of the competitors.

From the drawings and statements before us, it seems that the quadrangle to be covered is about 138 feet long, and 102 feet wide (it has been usually called larger), and M. Marcellis is forming the roof, in two springs, if we may so term it, represented in our engraving, wholly of cast-iron and glass, carried on twelve pillars, also of iron, placed against the ancient structure. The height of these pillars is about 33 feet; the height from the floor to the underside of the oval rim against which the twelve main ribs abut, and from which rises the central cupola, is about 57 feet, and the total height in the centre is about 94 feet. The oval opening is about 30 feet, on the longer axis, and 20 feet the shorter. The ribs, it will be seen, continue above this, forming externally a conical roof on an upright base, with a series of crocketed pinnacles around it. It must be remembered that a building about 23 feet wide, forming a covered ambulatory with rooms above, surrounds the quadrangle. The two ribs of the new construction, in the centre of each side, have ties running over this building, and the whole of the ribs are connected at the foot by other ties.

The Antwerp *Bourse* was originally constructed in 1531, and was adopted by Sir Thomas Gresham, as the model for the Exchange erected by him in London. In our fifth volume, some particulars of it, with illustrative engravings, will be found.† The columns are curiously sculptured: the trefoiled arches, it will be seen, are not pointed, but consist of parts of a circle, and the character of the arcade is what would be called in England "debased." M. Marcellis takes another view of it, and it was this that regulated his design. Two great schools, says he, in substance, arose out of the ruins of Greek and Roman architecture, namely, the Gothic or pointed arch school, to which belong the principal edifices of the middle ages, and the Byzantine school, less known amongst us, but fully developed in the East. The Lombard school, often erroneously called Byzantine, never attained a position to admit of its being placed in competition with these two great schools. The pointed arch (*ogive*) is the characteristic of the Gothic style, an arch more *prononcé* than those which concur in the formation of the *ogive*, and more particularly the cupola, which is produced by the revolution of that arch, distinguish, he urges, the Byzantine school, and the secondary schools which were derived from it. Inquiring then in which category the ancient Bourse of Antwerp, should be placed, whether it has the seal of the North, or does not rather reveal an Eastern origin, he maintains that it belongs essentially to the Byzantine school; that the curves belonging to the latter, such as the epicycloid, are stamped upon it; and that it is as far removed from the architecture of our churches as it approaches the type of all mosques. To prove it, the writer says, if you take the outline of any one of the arcades of the Bourse, and cause it to revolve on its vertical axis, the figure that it will describe will be that of a mosque of a round form covered with its dome slightly flattened at the summit. Harmony was essential, and therefore the designer has avoided pointed forms, and adopted what he considers the Byzantine type.

Quite recently M. Marcellis has endeavoured to lead the authorities to re-erect the Bourse entirely, and has published a design for it founded on the old structure, but wholly of iron, together with a series of able pamphlets in support of his views. He did not succeed, however, in obtaining their acquiescence, and we will not say we are sorry for it.

M. Marcellis writes like a true artist, full of enthusiasm and desire to advance the artistic reputation of his country, and we cordially wish him success in his arduous undertaking.

* See page 329.

† See pp. 80 and 446.

ON THE FORM, TREATMENT, AND APPLICATION OF THE PEDIMENT.*

I WOULD merely add, on the subject of the tympanum sculpture, that I have often felt surprise at that inartistic cramping of the composition generally apparent in the pediments, both of ancient and modern masters. I cannot see any architectural necessity for the exact conformity of the sculpture to the angular shape of the ground, *i. e.* filling up by means of, first, sitting, then kneeling, succeeded by reclining, figures that appear prostrate more for the purpose of filling up the extreme points of the triangle, than in obedience to the idea embodied by the subject. Might not these angles, I would ask, be blocked up or formed into panels as spandrils with some device?

A pediment may have decoration on its apex only, or on apex and extremities together; but except in very large pediments, a broad group of figures should not be placed on more than two of them; *i. e.* either on the apex without the extremities, or on the two extremities only; and the rule should invariably be held binding that the extreme figures should not exceed in general or average breadth, including drapery, the upper diameter of the column. Coupled columns at the angles, though not to be generally recommended, give opportunity for grouped figures as a crowning. When all three points are decorated, there should be a connection or relationship between the figures, for which, indeed, their relative positions are peculiarly adapted, the centre commanding the others, and giving facility for their constituting one action—as Apollo slaying the children of Niobe, or, Jupiter, from the centre, hurling his thunderbolts at the Titans, placed at the extremities, and which three figures on the same horizontal line could not.

When they cannot be made to constitute the different parts of one action, or historical or poetic incident such as those I have just named, they may yet have an allegorical or mythological reference to each other, as in the law courts, Dublin, where, if I mistake not, the Jewish lawgiver, Moses, with the two tables of stone, occupies the centre, while figures of Justice and Mercy respectively decorate the extremities.

Statues of our own countrymen eminent in that walk or intellectual pursuit to the interests of which the building is devoted,—in law, for instance, over assize-courts; in music over a concert-hall,—might be, and indeed have been, employed. While connection would thus be secured by associating together on the same pediment men of kindred minds and professions, as John Howard and William Wilberforce, for example. There are men (and such indeed are those I have just mentioned) whose effigies would represent an idea, a virtue, or a science, as Howard's of active benevolence, Watt's of mechanical science; but for want of acting on this principle, and making due arrangement and selection, the statues that embellish many public buildings awaken only incongruous ideas, instead of each illustrating an other, and strengthening the impression which its fellow may inspire. Now there should be the closest relationship between every figure so brought into juxtaposition; and not only should this be the case with the different figures of the acroteria, but these figures should also throw light on the pediment subject, as the pediment subject should again illustrate them.

For this principle we have illustrious examples in extant production. The Parthenon sculpture is the mythological history of Greece; and the natural and significant arrangement of the figures in the mediæval edifices, embodying the events of sacred history, and giving individual forms to the entire range of Christian theology, from the divine persons of the Trinity through all the varied ranks of angels, saints, and martyrs, are worthy of study and imitation in classic design.

There is an objection, it may be well here to notice, which I have heard raised against acroteral figures, that they must excite a painful impression of danger in the breast of the spectator. If the figures were entire imitations of humanity, and we could for a moment forget that they were not real men or women, the contemplation of them would be disagreeable enough, as it always is to see a mason or slater in such a precarious situation; but those who raise this objection forget the conditions of sculpture, and that being an abstraction, not an imitation, it cannot possibly excite feelings that only the living subject, or one that would pass for it, could produce.

Figures sitting or reclining along the raking or inclined sides of a pediment, with their backs to each other, and presenting their profiles to the spectator in a front view, as often seen in old Italian and French works, exhibit a want of the unity I have contended for as well as of unity in the composition, and also interfere with the pyramidal tendency of the latter.

When the tympanum is occupied by a figure subject, particularly if the figures be in full relief, the apex and extremities would be better if crowned with animals or other objects, or by busts which would be no inelegant decoration; the feeling for variety would, I think, in the absence of any other, demand this; but there is another consideration, and perhaps a more important one that suggests it: a figure on the summit if larger than those forming the tympanum subject injures its effect, while if of the same size it may lose some portion of its dignity by suggesting the idea of some stray or refractory figure escaped from its place beneath. We might draw upon the animal kingdom with much effect to a far greater extent than we do; lions, oxen, and other quadrupeds, according to the contemplated character, would lack neither beauty nor sublimity on a proper scale surmounting our public buildings. The eagle, the hawk, and other birds, flower or foliage composition after the manner of the Greek anthemion or honeysuckle, all present themselves to the architects imagination as characters of beauty and expression by which to embellish the pediment, and so far render architecture what it ought to be, a

* See p. 289, *ante*.

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